

Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-20

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINT; VE

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN ELECTIONS: AD EXPLOITS GAITHER POLL AND
COPEI COUNTERATTACKS

REF: CARACAS 9230

SUMMARY: AD'S PUBLICIZING OF THE GAITHER POLL SHOWING CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ LEADING IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE (REFTEL) HAS PROVOKED A STRONG COUNTERATTACK FROM COPEI AND OTHER PARTIES, INCLUDING THE CHARGE OF FOREIGN (READ U.S.) INTERVENTION IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CSE) PRESIDENT PIETRI HAS STATED THAT THE CSE HAS NO AUTHORITY TO BAR PUBLICIZING THE RESULTS OF POLLS, BUT COPEI AND OTHER PARTIES ARE PRESSING FOR A DECLARATION CONDEMNING FOREIGN INTERVENTION. GEORGE GAITHER HIMSELF REPORTEDLY LEFT VENEZUELA ON THE DAY THE POLL WAS RELEASED. END SUMMARY.

1. FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS AD HAS BEEN GIVING HEAVY PUBLICITY TO THE RESULTS OF THE GAITHER POLL(REFTEL), USING FULL-PAGE NEWSPAPER ADS AND RADIO AND TV SPOTS. ON OCTOBER 30 AD PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ TOLD THE PRESS HE IS LEADING IN THE LATEST NATIONWIDE DATOS POLL BY AN EVEN GREATER MARGIN (30 PERCENT FOR HIM VS. 21 PERCENT FOR COPEI CANDIDATE LORENZO FERNANDEZ) THAN IN THE GAITHER POLL. PEREZ ALSO
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REITERATED HIS CHALLENGE TO COPEI TO PUBLISH RESULTS OF THE

GETAS POLL.

2. COPEI AND A NUMBER OF MINOR PARTIES HAVE TRIED TO BELITTLE THE RESULTS OF THE POLL BY QUESTIONING GAITHER'S TECHNICAL COMPETENCE, AND TO TURN THE TABLES ON AD BY CLAIMING AD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FOSTERING FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, IN THE PERSON OF GAITHER INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT GEORGE GAITHER, A U.S. CITIZEN. COPEI SEC GEN PEDRO PABLO AGUILAR TOLD THE PRESS OCTOBER 30 THAT COPEI IS PROTESTING TO THE CSE THE "INTERVENTION OF FOREIGNERS" (I.E., GAITHER) IN VENEZUELAN POLITICAL AFFAIRS, WHICH, HE SAID, IS REPUDIATED BY ALL VENEZUELAN. ANONYMOUS RADIO ADS (PAID FOR BY COPEI, ACCORDING TO AD) HAVE APPEARED ACCUSING GAITHER OF HAVING TIES WITH OIL COMPANIES AND OF GIVING OUT FALSE INFORMATION. LOWER-RANKING COPEI OFFICIALS ARE REPORTED IN THE PRESS TO HAVE SAID THAT AD'S USE OF A U.S. POLLING ORGANIZATION SIGNIFIES THAT U.S. COMPANIES ARE FINANCING THE AD CAMPAIGN, AND THAT "UNDOUBTEDLY" AD HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

3. CSE PRESIDENT PIETRI HAS TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE COUNCIL HAS NO POWER TO PREVENT DIVULGING POLL RESULTS, BUT COPEI AND OTHER PARTIES ARE PRESSING FOR A CSE STATEMENT CONDEMNING FOREIGN INTERVENTION. THE PRESIDENT OF FEDERAL DISTRICT ELECTORAL COUNCIL, A MEMBER OF FDP (ALLIED WITH COPEI FOR THE ELECTIONS), REPORTEDLY DECLARED THAT HIS BODY WILL CONSIDER LEGAL ACTION AGAINST GAITHER.

4. GAITHER'S WHEREABOUTS WERE SUBJECT OF MUCH SPECULATION UNTIL OCTOBER 31, WHEN THE PRESS REPORTED HE LEFT VENEZUELA FOR NEW YORK ON THE SAME DAY (OCTOBER 27) THAT HE APPEARED IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCING THE POLL RESULTS. THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL DEMANDS THAT GAITHER NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY UNTIL THE QUESTION OF WHETHER HE HAD ENGAGED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITY WAS CLEARED UP, AND AGUILAR IMPLIED THAT GAITHER ENTERED THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY ON A TOURIST VISA. PRESS ATTENTION HAS NOW FOCUSED ON THE PURPORTED LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF GAITHER, NOEL LINDSAY, A BRITISH SUBJECT WHOM THE PRESS INCORRECTLY IDENTIFIES AS A U.S. CITIZEN.

5. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT AD IS USING THE POLLS TO TRY TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CREATE A BANDWAGON EFFECT FOR PEREZ (WHICH COULD ATTRACT CAMPAIGN FUNDS), WHILE COPEI IS COUNTERING WITH THE OLD SPECTER OF U.S. INTERVENTION. IF COPEI PRESSES TOO HARD ON THE U.S. INTERVENTION THEME, HOWEVER, AD CAN COUNTER BY NOTING THAT COPEI IS ALSO USING A FOREIGN POLLING ORGANIZATION, I.E., THE WEST GERMAN FIRM GETAS. MCCLINTOCK

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